

Eighteenth Sunday A

When Our Lord fed the multitudes he performed a miracle. Over his three years of public ministry he worked thirty-three miracles. Some were of healing, for he had great compassion on the sick, others were of quality, he gave sight to the blind, still others were in nature, he walked on water or calmed the storm. But, on this occasion we have a miracle of quantity. He multiplied the fish and loaves so as to feed the tens of thousands of hungry people in his midst. We are not told that he changed the quality of the fish, that, for example, they brought to him perch and he changed it into salmon or that the bread was wholemeal and he made it into rye. What we are told is that everyone ate as much as they wanted and when they were finished twelve baskets were filled with the scraps. Why were those scraps collected? Because God never wastes his graces – we might, but he doesn't.

Some early Church fathers, who knew the Bible better than us, saw in this event typological references to Christ himself. We note that there were five loaves of bread – why not six or four? The five represent the five sacred wounds in the body of Christ who is the true *bread of life*. Also, that there were two fish which reminds us of the two natures in Christ: He who is true God and true Man. Furthermore, this quantitative miracle of bodily nourishment reminds us also of how much God does provide for us. The word providence is proper to God alone. It is a Latin word *pro videre* – to see on behalf of another. When we are faithful to God he keeps his eyes on us. He will provide for our needs. In response to that, some may say, what about the poor then?

Good question! God has provided us with the means to care and feed for all 8 billion of us. However, we who are the stewards of creation have lost our way. We are lost in his cosmos! For today the values of being are replaced with those of having – having things. The only goal which counts, for some, is the pursuit of one's own material well-being. The so-called "quality of life" is interpreted in terms of economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, beauty and pleasure, at the expense of the more profound interpersonal dimensions of our spiritual well being and existential ends. Have we forgotten that we are only here to go there. Our present time is borrowed time, that is running out with the passing of every day! So why is the focus on here and not there. Because our media is controlled by the wealthy who are secular humanists. They only live for now. So the rich do get richer and the poor do get poorer. Also, the problem is not over population, as some globalists claim, for Holland is one of the most populated countries in the world, yet it remains most affluent. The real issue is not population but distribution of wealth, the sharing of resources and technology. Here are some stats on world poverty.

- Oxfam claims that the world's twelve richest individuals hold more wealth than the poorest half of humanity.
- Globally 1 in 5 children live in extreme poverty on less than \$3 a day in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Total billionaire wealth surged by 16% in this last year to reach \$18.3 trillion. The rich are getting richer!
- In the USA, China, Europe - 1% of the world's population own 45% of the global wealth, that is, \$210 trillion.

So, let us be content with what we have. Also, abandonment to divine Providence frees us from anxiety about tomorrow. One person who travelled all over Australia and lived in extreme poverty, but with great joy, was St. Mary of the Cross. She was born of Scottish heritage in 1842. As a young woman she knew much about poverty and frugality. In 1860, Mary became a governess in Penola, South Australia, where she met Father Julian Tenison Woods. Several years later they founded the Congregation of St. Joseph, whose mission was to found schools and orphanages of which twelve were in our diocese. The order even flourished in the face of dissension and conflict. St. Mary of the Cross suffered from rheumatism for many years and finally died of a stroke on May 25, 1909. As our first Aussie saint, we honour her next Saturday, let's keep her legacy alive by caring much for the poor and needy. Remember she said: "Never see a need without doing something about it."